

National Association of State Park Directors  
and  
National Park Service

## CHILDREN AND NATURE PLAN FOR ACTION

### THE CRISIS

The way children understand and experience their natural world has changed radically over the past several decades. Their physical contact and intimacy with the natural outdoors has diminished greatly. Their inability to connect with nature is now recognized as a national issue of concern. There is speculation that the loss of a child/nature connection threatens their independent judgment, their value of place, their ability to feel awe and wonder, their sense of stewardship for the earth and their psychological and physical health. Physical inactivity and a lack of contact with nature among our youth and families are becoming increasingly recognized as contributing to a national health crisis that can manifest itself in child obesity and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

### THE CHALLENGE

Stephen T. Mather's original vision for the National Park Service included the recognition that a comprehensive system of state parks would be needed to complement the unique resources provided by the National Park Service as we collectively address the many environmental and social challenges facing this nation and its unique natural resources.

As the trusted stewards of these resources, it is now our challenge to reengage our children and families with the natural world and reverse the trend which has led to nature deficit disorder.

### THE APPROACH

The leadership of our system of state and national parks will work collaboratively to reconnect our youth and families with the land in such a way as to create a new generation of stewards, improve the mental and physical health of our nation, reduce the cost of health care, increase awareness of the important role nature plays in our lives and ensure the perpetuation of the resources entrusted to our care.

### THE GOAL

To see this nation's children and their families again fully participating in outdoor recreation activities and rediscovering their natural and cultural heritage.

### THE PLAN OF ACTION

The National Association of State Park Directors and the National Park Service Leadership Council have met on this sixth day of September, 2007 in Williamsburg, Virginia and have agreed to work collectively on the following plan of action.

- Focus on individual initiatives to increase the public's awareness and value of connecting children and nature toward a goal of improving the knowledge of our nation's natural resources and the health and welfare of the present and future generation of young Americans.
- Join together in a continuing dialogue to discuss common issues and implement solutions to create a seamless system of services.
- Share information and knowledge on developing and expanding natural resource education and recreation opportunities for children and their families.
- Engage other federal, state, local, tribal and non-government partners in shared technology and interactive programs and problem solving activities to achieve mutually agreed upon goals to connect children and nature.
- Promote a national campaign to recognize the importance of connecting children and families to nature.

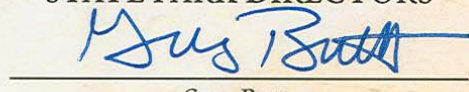


NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

  
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
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